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Lincoln, the Chosen of God

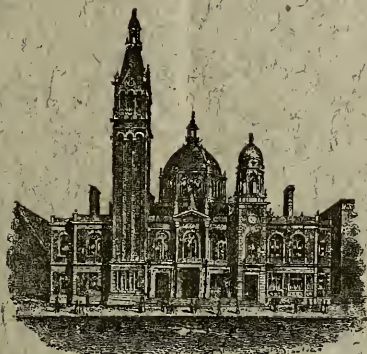
A DISCOURSE

By Rabbi JOSEPH KRAUSKOPF, D. D.

.....AT.....

Series XIX. No. 13

Feb. 11th, 1906



TEMPLE KENESETH ISRAEL,

Broad St. above Columbia Ave.

PHILADELPHIA.

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Dr. Krauskopf puts his own case strongly; he speaks out in no uncertain voice (and well he may) about the calumnies and bitter persecutions from which the Jews have suffered and are suffering, but for himself good will, forbearance and brotherly love are his watchwords; these are the qualities which he desires to see prevail and it is to advance their cause that his book was written.

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Lincoln, the Chosen of God.

A DISCOURSE, AT TEMPLE KENESETH ISRAEL,

BY

RABBI JOSEPH KRAUSKOPF, D. D.

Philadelphia, February 11th, 1906.

It was on February 11th, 1861, forty-five years ago this day, that Abraham Lincoln left Springfield, Illinois, to proceed towards the capital of the Nation, as its chosen President. His friends and neighbors came to take leave of him, and, while their hearts rejoiced at the honor that had been conferred upon their fellow-townsmen, there were tears in the eyes of many in the hour of parting. Lincoln himself was deeply touched. Had he and they a presentiment that they might never see each other again? "Friends," said he in solemn farewell: "I know not how soon I shall see you again. A duty has devolved upon me greater than that which has devolved upon any other man since Washington. He never would have succeeded except for the aid of Divine Providence, upon which he at all times relied. On the same Almighty Being I place my reliance. Pray that I may receive that Divine assistance, without which I cannot succeed, but with which success is assured."

Lincoln, on leaving home, asks for prayers.

I have no doubt but that the prayers thus asked for were fervently lifted up for the President elect, and not by his townpeople alone but also by millions of his supporters throughout the troubled land. Was their prayer answered? Many there are who will at once say *no*, and, in proof, will point to a whole Nation inconsolable, aye, to a civilized world in tears, because of his death of martyrdom, a little more than four years after his leave-taking at Springfield.

Their having been answered questioned.

As for me, I know of no better instance of prayer answered than the success that attended the supplications that were offered up for Lincoln when he entered upon his perilous office. He did not ask that supplications be offered for his escape from a death of martyrdom; he but asked for prayers that success

By reason of his martyrdom.

might attend his labors to save the country from dismemberment and to remove a malignant cancer that threatened the very life of the Nation. In a little more than four years, the Union was saved and slavery was abolished, and, his work being done, the greatest since the days of Washington, martyrdom came as a halo of glory rather than as a sign of failure or as a token of divine disapprobation.

Of course, had mortals had the disposition of it, they would have assigned a far different end to the savior of his Nation and to the emancipator of the slave than death by an assassin's bullet, five short days after General Lee's surrender at Appomattox, on the very day of the rehoisting of Old Glory over Fort Sumter, and but a little more than a month after a grateful people had entrusted itself to his wise and fearless leadership for another term of four years. They would have had him live to a good, old age, they would have had him continue in the full enjoyment of the fruitage of his labors, the idol of his people, the inspiration of all living kind, until a gentle death would have translated him from his field of earthly labor to the regions of his celestial rewards.

But God's ways are not our ways, says the prophet, neither are His thoughts our thoughts. When I consider the wisdom that was manifest in the choice of this peerless leader, I cannot but feel that in his tragic taking-off, when his work was done, there may have been a wisdom no less divine than that which called him when his work was needed. Probably his highest reward lay in having been spared the ingratitude of the Nation he had saved. Many a savior might have died happy had he died when his work was done, had he died before adulation could turn to envy and envy to malice, and malice to calumny, and calumny to base ingratitude.

Every move in this wonderful man's career seems to speak of providential call and guidance. No man was ever more the chosen of God than was Abraham Lincoln, and yet no man ever gave less evidence and promise of it than he. What people, unaided by divine direction, would have dared to select for its leader this untried man of the untrained West, in the crisis in which our

Man would have assigned a different end.

Martyrdom probably design of God.

No man ever more the chosen of God.

Nation found itself prior to the outbreak of the civil war? They would have sought among experienced statesmen, among men of proven executive power, of tried leadership, of great military prowess. They would have inquired among the Universities for those of marked attainments and of brilliant records, or among the illustrious families for one whose distinguished name and descent might dazzle the masses and command the largest following of the select. Only the intermixture of the will of Providence with the will of man can explain the daring choice our fathers made when they selected Abraham Lincoln for their chief-executive. The capitol of Washington had never before, and has never since, seen a President like him. Never before had a man received so little training for so exalted a place, never had a man possessed such few graces for a position that was to throw him in contact with the most polished of the land, never had a man had so little schooling for an office that required profound knowledge in many of the most intricate problems of political and economic and military science.

And never before nor since did man master such gigantic problems, within so short a time, as they were mastered by the first of our martyr-presidents. Long before his first term expired, there was no statesman in all the land comparable to him, no master of the English tongue superior to him, no military strategist like unto the chief-commander of the Nation. Read his deliberations with his cabinet, read his consecration of the battlefield of Gettysburg, his second inaugural address, his orders to his generals, or, better, retrace your steps to the wretched log-cabin in the mountain-wilds of Kentucky, where his cradle stood, and then follow his career, step by step, from cabin to capitol, and tell of another like it, in history or in literature, in fiction or in truth.

His father a backwoodsman, unlettered, unmannered, thriftless. His mother an invalid passing into the grave before her boy is yet nine years old. We next see him in the new lands of Indiana but in the midst of the old hardships, differing only from the other in finding here some opportunity for schooling, seven months long in all—the only schooling in all his life. But, if

Never a career
like his.

From cabin to
capitol.

of the school of letters he had little, he had an abundance of the school of life. Life for him, from earliest childhood to manhood's estate, meant hard toil, from early morn till late at night, for little more than the absolute necessities of life. And full of hard toil his life continued to be till his last day, now as farm hand, now as rail-splitter, now as flatboatman, as shopkeeper, soldier, legislator, lawyer, congressman, and finally as President of the United States.

And while that passage from log-cabin to White House, from farmhand to President was marked by wonderful flashes of intellectual genius and of moral and spiritual greatness, such revelations were vouchsafed only to friends and neighbors or to clients and constituents. To the Eastern and Southern people from among whom the Presidents and great men had hitherto come, when they first beheld him, he seemed a gnarled, homely-featured, horn-handed, hoosier from the uncultured West, more fit to drive a yoke of oxen than to guide a nation out of a sea of trouble into a haven of rest.

Listen to the impression his appearance made on our own townsman, Mr. Alexander McClure, who had done much toward effecting his election, and who had proceeded to Springfield to confer with him on matters of national importance. "My first sight of him was a deep disappointment. Before me stood a middle-aged man, tall, gaunt, ungainly, homely, ill-clad—slouchy pantaloons, vest held shut by a button or two, tightly fitting sleeves to exaggerate his long, bony arms, all supplemented by an awkwardness that was uncommon among men of intelligence. I confess that my heart sank within me as I remembered that this was the man chosen by a great nation to become its ruler in the gravest period of its history."

It was not long, however, before Mr. McClure discovered, as the Nation discovered later, that it was God who had chosen Lincoln, that, when the people cast their vote for him, they but expressed the will of Providence, which had decreed that the Nation founded by the Colonial Fathers shall not be severed, and that the slave shall be free. They remembered what the Bible said respecting the choice of the shepherd David in preference of other

His fitness at first unrecognized.

Even by his friends

His divine call made manifest at last.

men, who, in external appearance, seemed the better fitted for the kingship: "the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." They recalled the humble origin of Moses and Jesus and Luther, and recognized that they whom God chooses for his work must have other distinctions than looks or wealth or name or culture. They must have hearts of saints, souls of heroes and martyrs. They must serve as anvils in the smithies of affliction so as to be able to serve as the hammer of God when the hour for striking comes.

It was a critical time in the story of our Nation, the most critical since the days of our conflict with our mother country across the sea. The hand of brother was lifted against brother. The South stood arrayed against the North. The hour called for a great man, for a man wise of heart as well as of mind, for a man of inspired soul and resolute will, for a man whose personal ties and family traditions counted as nothing in the balance, for a man who, being of the common people, and the conflict of the hour having the greatest need of the common people, could easiest appeal to them and come in closest touch with them. The hour called for a man all whose labor and ambition were consecrated to his people and all whose purposes accountable to his God.

Such a man was Lincoln. A man more honest than he never lived. Rivals derided him, parties ridiculed him, papers caricatured him but no man was ever able even to breathe the breath of suspicion upon any of his motives. Unlike so many of the schooled diplomats and statesmen, who, in their eager development of brain, starve the heart, his brain was all the keener because of its blending with heart, and his heart all the richer because of its blending with brain. An unkind word never passed his lips, an unkind deed never stained his hand, an unworthy thought never polluted his mind. His countenance, rugged and gnarled as it was, was as open as a page of Scriptures; his eye as clear as innocence itself.

Not ambition, not lust of power or wealth, of fame or name, bore him to the heights he occupied. He had never sought an honor or an office, had never thought himself fit for a position of responsibility when it was entrusted to him.

In the need of the hour.

The heart of a saint.

Men in public office have been modest, have been unassuming, but never one like Abraham Lincoln. There was no more surprised man in all the land than he was when the choice of President fell to him, and it would have been difficult to find one who could have accepted it with greater reluctance. Full forty years long had he yearned for the coming of a man strong and wise enough to rid the Nation of the curse of slavery, without severing its bond of union. Full forty years long had that hope and prayer burnt within him, and would not cease burning, like the vision of the burning bush that Moses saw in the wilderness. And when the call came to him at last, as it had come to Moses, when the voice of God, through the voice of the people, called out to him, saying: "I have seen the afflictions of a people unjustly enslaved; I have heard its cry of anguish by reason of its taskmasters. I know the strife that is tearing the Nation asunder, and I am resolved to deliver it, through thy hand. Get thee to Washington, and inaugurate there the work of redemption and of union," when that call came, he, like Moses, had not the heart to rush upon a work, which the greatest had feared to touch, fearing lest, by unfitness, he overthrow all future chance, all further hope. "Let another and an abler go," he sadly said, "this is a work for giants, not for pigmies, like me."

It was a work for a giant, and for just such a giant as Lincoln was. It required a giant's heart to make an entry into the capital of the Nation, as President elect, such as he was obliged to make, in the dead of night, by stealth and by circuitous routes, to escape the assassin's hand. It required a giant's mind to present an inaugural address such as he presented, on the fourth of March, 1861, and to outline a course of action such as he laid before his Secretary of State. The men of his cabinet, proud of their statesmanship and scholarship and polish and influence, had believed that the Western hoosier, the accident of the polls, would but be a figurehead, that they themselves would rule and dictate the policies of the land. They soon learned that their chief was a ruler, not only by the grace but also by the call of God, a ruler with the inspiration of a prophet, with the wisdom of a sage, with the will-power of a conqueror. Before a month of his presidential term had elapsed, the Nation

The soul of a hero.

marvelled as much as it had doubted, and the South realized that it was a war to the death that it had entered upon.

And a war to the death it continued, four years long, till slavery was abolished and the union was saved. There was no abatement in its vigor, no change in its policy, no quarter to the enemy, until they recognized the stars and stripes as the common flag of all of the United States, until they conceded to the enslaved negro the human rights and political liberties which the white man enjoyed. There had been irresoluteness and vacillation too long, and at too terrible a cost. Had the issue been squarely met, had the voice of God instead of the voice of politics been spoken, had there been whole truths instead of half measures, in short, had there been a Lincoln in the Presidential chair fifty years earlier, there would have been no need of a civil war, no need of ravaged states, devastated homes, paralyzed industries, impoverished people, no need of brother's hand being raised against brother, no need of six hundred and twenty-five battles being fought, in which blood flowed like water, and which widowed and orphaned and darkened tens of thousands of homes.

Others before him had seen the calamity that threatened the Nation as clearly as he saw it, and had yearned for a redeemer as sincerely as he. Long before him, Patrick Henry had said the slave question "gives a gloomy prospect to future times," and George Mason had written to the legislature of Virginia "the laws of impartial Providence may avenge our injustice upon our posterity," and Jefferson had said: "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, and that His justice cannot sleep for ever," and Madison had said "where slavery exists there the republican theory becomes fallacious,"—but, while they saw the danger and despaired, he felt it and acted.

Others dared not to risk their political future, he dared to risk even his life. It was his innermost conviction that one nation, under one government, without slavery, had been divinely ordained, and he was resolved that not a State should be struck from the union by treason. He saw no other assurance for lasting peace than war to the bitter end, no other promise of harmony between

His purpose
Immovable.

Others dared not
to risk their
political future.

He dared to risk
his life.

the North and South than a decision upon the battlefield whether or not all men are born free and equal politically, whether or not individual states had a right to secede. It was in our old Independence Hall where he solemnly declared that he believed in the Declaration of Independence, that he believed with all his heart that it guaranteed liberty to all, and reaching a climax of eloquence, and speaking as one inspired, he said: "If the country cannot be saved without giving up that principle, I would rather be assassinated on the spot than surrender it."

And well did he see to it that the country did not surrender its principle. And dearly did he pay for it. That of which he had had a presentiment when he spoke in our city came to pass. The assassin's hand struck him down, but not till, by his labors, his country was saved, till the stars and stripes waved again over the North and South, till union and federal soldier laid down their arms, never to take them up again against each other.

The turf has grown thick over the graves of those who paid with their lives for their country's honor. The bitter enmities of half a century ago are now forgotten. But not forgotten is the name of Abraham Lincoln. Not forgotten is the sacrifice of martyrdom which he laid upon the altar of his country.

Lives immortal as
Savior of the union
as Freer of the
slave.

Annually the still remaining veterans of the long and deadly conflict assemble to do reverence to the memory of their well-nigh canonized leader. Annually sons of these veterans assemble to pledge their fealty to the memory of him who led their fathers and their country to victory. Annually, on his natal day, a grateful posterity burnishes into new lustre his crown of glory, and piously resolves that as long as oceans shall beat against our Atlantic and Pacific shores, as long as the Alleghenies and the Rocky Mountains shall lift their heads into the blue empyrean, as long as proud Old Glory shall wave from highest North to furthest South, so long shall the name of Abraham Lincoln live in the loyal American heart as the savior of his country, as the Chosen of God.

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15. Give While You Live.
16. The Bubble of Glory.
17. Compulsory School Attendance.
19. A Plea for Home Rule in Ireland.
22. To-day.
24. The Red, White and Blue.

SERIES VII. 1893—1894.

1. Religions Die—Religion Lives.
7. Social and Religious Barriers.
11. Debt to Ancestry—Duty to Posterity.
17. A Father's Love.
23. A Sister's and Brother's Love.

SERIES VIII. 1894—1895.

2. My Creed.
4. How Not to Help the Poor.
6. The Stage as a Pulpit.
8. The Pulpit as a Stage.
10. Religion in the Public Schools.
12. "Hope Deferred Maketh the Heart Sick."
16. Post Mortem Praise.
18. The Better for Our Enemies.
20. The Worse for Our Friends.
23. The Israelite as a Husbandman.
31. Arms Against a Sea of Troubles.

SERIES IX. 1895—1896.

2. Ethics or Religion?
3. Faith With Reason.
5. Wherein Israel has Failed.
11. The Place of Prayer in the Service.
13. The Place of Music in the Service.
15. The Place of Ceremony in the Service.

SERIES X. 1896—1897.

2. The Guard Neither Dies nor Surrenders.
4. Thy People Shall be My People.
6. Whoso Tilleth His Soil Shall Have Bread.
8. The Mote and the Beam.
10. What Has Been Shall be Again.
12. The People Without a Country.
13. Uses and Abuses of the Pulpit.
15. Uses and Abuses of the Press.
17. Uses and Abuses of the Novel.
21. The Best Preacher—The Heart.
23. The Best Teacher—Time.
25. The Best Book—The World.
27. The Best Friend—God.
28. Ten Seasons of Sunday Lectures.

SERIES XI. 1897—1898.

1. A Wise Question is the Half of Knowledge.
3. Woe, if All Men Speak Well of You.
5. Good to be Great, Great to be Good.
7. Who is God that I Should Hear Him?
9. Noble Impulses are Speechless Prophets.
18. The Martyr Race.

SERIES XII. 1898—1899.

4. The Gospel of Joy.
6. The Gospel of Sorrow.
10. The Sunset of Life.
12. Old Memories and New Hopes.
18. 90th Birthday of Lincoln and Darwin.
20. The Voice that Calleth in the Wilderness.
21. Turning Parent and Child Toward Each Other.
24. Israel Weak, and Yet Strong.
26. Cyrano de Bergerac, the Story of the Jew.
28. Responsibility of the Rich.

SERIES XIII. 1899—1900.

1. "The Choir Invisible."
3. Chanukah Lights and the Christmas Tree.
12. The Will and the Way.
14. Individual Morality.
16. Domestic Morality.
18. Social Morality.
20. Sectarian Morality.
26. International Morality.
28. Isaac M. Wise—A Memorial Tribute.

SERIES XIV. 1900—1901.

2. From Better to Best.
6. Our Wrongs to Our Little Ones.
8. "We Jews."
10. The Diagnosis.
12. A Remedy.
25. A Time to Keep Silence.
26. "God's First Temples."
27. Daybreak.

SERIES XV. 1901—1902.

1. Preacher or Teacher?
7. The Reign of Right.
9. The Reign of the Sill.
10. The Reign of Love.
11. The Reign of Religion.
14. Boyhood and Girlhood—School Days.
15. Youth—the Age of Love and Matrimony.
18. Manhood—the Age of Labor.
21. Decline—the Age of Beneficence.
22. Death—the Age of Rest.
23. The Aftermath, Summary and Conclusion.
25. "Still Achieving, Still Pursuing."

SERIES XVI. 1902—1903.

1. A Wreath Upon the Grave of Emile Zola.
2. Secretary Hay and the Roumanian Jews.
3. "Lo, the Dreamer Cometh."
4. Quoth the Raven "Nevermore"
5. Quoth the Reason "Evermore."
6. The Cause of Sin.
7. Selfishness.
8. Avarice.
9. Envy.
10. Anger.
12. Infidelity.
15. Meaning of Virtue.
16. Life—Wisdom.
17. Self-Control.
18. Self-Control Continued.
19. Courage.
21. Justice.
23. Our Debt and Duty to Dr. Wise.
24. The Two Redeemers.

SERIES XVII. 1903—1904.

1. The Demands of the Age on the Church.
2. The Higher and Lower Pleasures.
3. Is God or Man Unjust?
4. Canst Thou by Searching Find God?
5. "Mary of Magdala."
6. The Battle Not to the Strong."
10. A Backward Look.
11. Not Congestion but Colonization.
12. No Morality Without Spirituality.
14. What Shall Our Children Read?
15. What Shall Our Children Believe.
16. The Russo Japanese War.
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19. Pessimism.
20. Optimism.
21. Realism.
23. Idealism.
24. Dowietism.
26. Trade—Unionism.

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3. "Turn Not Back."
5. Kindle the Hanukkah Lights.
6. Zionism as a Cure of Anti-Semitism.
8. Complaints and Remedies.
9. Parsifal, the Triumph of Innocence.
10. Amfortas, the Torment of Guilt.
11. "Still Throbs the Heart."
12. Does Religion Pay?
13. Made Wise Through Pity.
14. Lincoln, an Inspiration.
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17. Israel, a Nation, Race or People? II.
19. Religious Training in the Home.
21. The Jew Militant.
22. The Jew Militant. II.
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14. The Sunday Sabbath.
16. "Lest we Forget—Lest we Forget."
18. Ninetieth Birthday of Lincoln and Darwin
20. The Voice that Calleth in the Wilderness
21. "Turning Parents and Children Toward Each Other."
24. Israel-Weak, And Yet Strong-(Joel iv, 10)
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6. The Stage as a Pulpit.
8. The Pulpit as a Stage.
10. Religion in the Public Schools.
12. "Hope Deferred Maketh the Heart Sick"
14. "Physician, Heal Thyself."
16. Post Mortem Praise.
18. The Better For Our Enemies.
20. The Worse For Our Friends.
22. Nearer my God to Thee.
24. Vicious Virtues.
26. Israel's Faith is Israel's Fate—Martyrs' Day
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SERIES VI. 1892—1893.

1. Israel's Debt to the New World.
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5. Good to be Great—Great to be Good.
3. "Woe, if all men speak well of you."
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2. Ethics or Religion?
3. Faith with Reason.
5. { Wherein Israel has Failed.
7. { Wherein Christians have Failed.
9. { How Both Might Succeed Together.
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1. Religions Die—Religion Lives.
3. Orphan-Homes—or Orphans in Homes.
5. The Last Rose of Summer.
7. Social and Religious Barriers.
9. Comfort ye, Comfort ye, my people.
11. Debt to Ancestry—Duty to Posterity.
13. Only a Jew.
15. A Mother's Love.
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19. A Wife's Love.
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14. Civilization's Duty to Woman.
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3. Gain from Pain.
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7. Russia and her Jews.
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23. Eyes they have, and see not.
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25. Tongues they have, and speak not.
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1. "Eppur si Muove" (And yet she moves).
2. Jew Against Jew.
3. Possibilities of Youth.
4. Possibilities of Age.
5. Art as an Educator.
6. A Child's Prayer.
7. Nurseries of Crime.
8. The Jew as a Patriot.
9. Are We Better than the Heathen?
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12. How Mountains into Molehills Dwindle.
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14. Religion in the Laboratory.

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16. Myths in the New Testament
17. Living for Others.
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21. The Tyranny of Fashion.
22. Religious Unbelievers and Irreligious Believers.
23. War Against War.
24. Martyr's Day.
25. Native against Foreigner.
26. Ancient and Modern Saints.
27. Shifting but not Drifting.

SERIES II. 1888—1889.

1. Whence, Whither and Why?

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3. Uncharitable Charity.
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